



THE SENATE SPOTLIGHT

Volume 1 Issue 1

Georgia State Senate

SEPTEMBER 2005



Special Session 2005

Georgia General Assembly meets to respond to gas crisis in Georgia

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the State Senate convened on Tuesday, September 6, to consider temporary gas tax relief as well as adjusting the administrative costs that our state government employees are reimbursed for their official travel. The decision to hold a special session was made in conjunction with Governor Sonny Perdue's announcement that Georgia consumers will be exempt from the state motor fuel tax through the end of September. The Governor signed an Executive Order calling for a temporary moratorium on state collection of all motor fuel taxes. This is the second action taken to deal with the gas crisis in Georgia. Governor Perdue also signed an Executive Order enacting Georgia's price gouging statute to protect Georgia consumers from unlawful increases on gasoline and other products. Under state law, the Governor's decision must be ratified by the General Assembly, so lawmakers traveled from across the state to consider these decisions which will offer relief to Georgia's citizens, and to help the hurricane victims in any way possible while they were in Atlanta.

Senators dedicated to helping hurricane victims



Senators spent much of the second day of the Special Session volunteering their time and man power across metro Atlanta. Several members of the Senate were at the Georgia Red Cross Headquarters on Monroe Drive in Atlanta to donate blood and work with evacuees to determine their needs.

"It is truly heartbreaking to see citizens displaced from our sister states in such desperation and need," said Sen. Eric Johnson. "I commend all

the Georgians who have stepped up in this tragic time and donated money and assistance for these families. There is much work to be done, and I encourage those who want to help to contact their local Red Cross to see what is needed." Sen. Emanuel Jones pitched in to help unload supplies for the hurricane victims at the Red Cross Service Delivery Site in Henry County. Hundreds of people were helped at the site, located at McDonough Presbyterian Church in McDonough.



Different offices, one objective...serving you!

Senate Budget Office, Senate Information Office, Senate Research Office—what's the difference? Some people may not always understand the different functions these three offices perform for the Senate. Please take a minute to read what all the Senate Staff does in each individual office to serve you!

◆ **SENATE BUDGET OFFICE:** The Senate Budget and Evaluation Office is responsible for budget development and has recently expanded on those duties to include evaluation capacity per House Bill 85 from the 2005 Session. As a result of this expansion, SBEO has several new staff members. You can reach the Senate Budget Office at 404.463.1970.

◆ **SENATE INFORMATION OFFICE:** The Senate Information Office was established in 1972 to expand news coverage of the Senate to keep the public informed. The office acts as a conduit between the Senate and the public via the news media throughout the state. The Senate Public Information Office issues news releases, broadcast reports, media credentials, serves as a message center for Senators during the Session and provides information to media representatives and the public through a broad range of services. If you need the Senate Information Office, you can reach them at 404.656.0028.

◆ **SENATE RESEARCH OFFICE:** The Senate Research Office was created in 1975 and it serves all Senators and the Lt. Governor with objective information and analysis. By using a wide array of resources, including the internet, Senate Research has access to the latest, most accurate information available from all states, the federal government, and other public interest and professional sources. The Senate Research Office provides support to individual Senators on issues of policy development and both background and comparative research for state-wide and local legislation. In addition, Senate Research also staffs interim and standing committees; identifies public policy trends; produces study committee reports; summarizes legislation and gathers information on programs including cost analysis, program elements and success. You can reach the Senate Research Office at 404.656.0015.



Committee Action...

The Senate Research Office spotlights some of this summer's committee action....

Joint Coastal Georgia Sound Science Initiative Study Committee

The Joint Coastal Georgia Sound Science Initiative Study Committee, co-chaired by Senator Ross Tolleson and Representative Lynn Smith, met in Savannah on May 25-27th. The Committee met to examine the results of the Sound Science initiative, a seven-year, \$17 million study addressing concerns that the pumping of groundwater in the region is allowing saltwater to seep into the Upper Floridan drinking water aquifer. The Committee heard speakers from Georgia's water policy centers, municipalities and county governments in the region, environmental organizations, a hydrogeologist from the U.S. Geological Survey, and Carol Couch, the Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

The Committee met again in Brunswick on August 23-25th. The EPD presented the results of the Sound Science Initiative earlier, concluding that saltwater intrusion is at least 100 years away from the Savannah area. The Committee heard presentations from the Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Georgia Water Coalition, hydrogeologists, geologists, the real estate industry, municipalities and county governments in the region, and Carol Couch. The Committee is set to meet again in Atlanta in the fall to present its final recommendations.

The Senate Study Committee on Security for State and County Buildings

The Senate Study Committee on Security for State and County Buildings, chaired by Senator Joseph Carter, held its first meeting in Moultrie, Georgia at Moultrie Technical College on June 14, 2005 and its second meeting in Macon, Georgia on August 31, 2005. The Committee was created as a result of the Fulton County Courthouse shootings on March 11, 2005 which resulted in the deaths of Superior Court Judge Rowland Barnes, Court Reporter Julie Ann Brandau, and Fulton County Sheriff's Deputy Sergeant Hoyt Teasley.

The Committee has heard testimony from persons representing the Georgia Sheriff's Association; Association County Commissioners of Georgia; U.S. Marshals Office; Georgia State Patrol; District Attorneys Association of Georgia; and Circuit Court Chief Judges. Some suggestions brought to the Committees attention include:

- Provide additional training for all courthouse personnel and employees;
- Increase the use of security equipment such as cameras, metal detectors, panic buttons, etc;
- Develop better procedures for transporting inmates to and from jails and courthouses;
- Develop and implement statewide courthouse security standards and guidelines;
- Bring older court buildings up to modern security standards; and
- Avoid using the same approach to address security concerns in small and large counties.

The Committee plans to hold its final meeting in north Georgia in the fall.



Juvenile Code Re-write Study Commission

The Juvenile Code Re-write Study Commission, a joint Senate and House Study Committee co-chaired by Senator Bill Hamrick and Representative Mark Butler, is charged with identifying problems and inconsistencies in the Juvenile Code and drafting solutions. The Commission has broken down into three working subcommittees: a deprivation subcommittee; a

delinquency subcommittee that addresses pre-trial timelines and procedure; and a delinquency subcommittee that examines post-trial sentencing, disposition, and serious violent offenders. The subcommittees presented their recommendations at a well-attended public hearing in Savannah, at which several public officials and child advocates testified. The recommendations proposed by the Commission include:

- Unify all Code sections related to deprivation proceedings. Bring Georgia law into compliance with federal law with respect to deprivation hearings, reunification, and termination.
- Provide that a facility where a child is detained pending trial provide a list of all detainees to the chief judge and the prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction. Additionally, any child who is detained and charged with one of the "seven deadly sins"

must have the charge against him or her presented to the grand jury within 180 days of detention.

- Allow judges to confine a child found to have committed a designated felony act from zero up to 60 months. Currently, designated felons must be confined for at least 12 months.
- Rewrite Article 4 of Chapter 11 of Title 15 dealing with mental health issues, especially in the area of mental competence.

The next Study Commission Meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2005 in Carrollton.

Senate Budget's Spotlight on...Monthly Numbers



Revenues Up Double-Digits Year-To-Date

August revenue collections were up 4.5 percent from the same month last year. A switch in accounting practices last year added two extra days to August 2004. Those extra two days were added to make July 2005 whole for this Fiscal Year. For the year-to-date, Georgia revenues are up 10.8 percent or \$234 million. The 2006 budget is based on planned growth in revenues of 6.1 percent.

As of June 30th, the revenue shortfall reserve is \$381 million up from \$50 million last year. Of the \$381 million, \$158 million is available for appropriation for K-12 needs as specified in HB509 (2005 Session). These numbers may change once the final audit is complete before the end of the calendar year.



The Senate Spotlights...September Birthdays

Happy Birthday to....

Senator Doug Stoner

Alex Azarian- Senate Research

Tracy McAteer-Senate Budget

Betty Conner-Senate Secretary

Tarika Jackson-Senate Secretary

Audrey Lee- Senate Secretary

Karen Thompson- Senate Secretary

September 29th

September 7th

September 16th

September 9th

September 15th

September 1st

September 14th



The Senate Spotlight on... Asenith Dixon

What is your current job and/or assignments? Where did you go to college? I work as a Policy Analyst in the Senate Research Office assigned to Education and Higher Education issue areas. I graduated from the University of Georgia in 1999 with a degree in Sociology. I also have a Master's degree in Urban Policy Studies from Georgia State University.

How did you end up at the General Assembly?

I began my career in the healthcare field from 1999 through 2000. In 2001, I accepted a position as a Legislative Intern in the Secretary of the Senate's Office. Later the same year, an Administrative Assistant position opened up in the Senate Research Office. After two years and a Master's degree under my belt, I was promoted from Administrative Assistant, to Assistant Policy Analyst, and then to Policy Analyst in December of 2003.

Tell us something about yourself that most people may not know.

My mother is my greatest influence. Her father is a retired Longshoreman from Charleston who persevered through illiteracy to take care of his family. My grandfather passed down his never-give-up attitude and determination to my mother who taught my sister and me the same philosophy.

You have a beautiful daughter, Nzinga ("N-zing-ah"). Tell us about her.

Other than the fact that she is the best thing that has ever happened in my life, Nzinga is my seven year old who is a second-grade student at Parkside Elementary School. She currently is the Student of the Month for August, an honor she has been accepted for each year while at Parkside. Nzinga attends the Atlanta Public Schools' Challenge program for the gifted and talented. She also attends ballet classes at Spelman College and takes swimming lessons at the local Boys and Girls Club.

You are very involved in the community, especially PTA. What drives you to have such a demanding job and still have time to do more than most parents normally do?

I love children and believe that education is the number one resource for attaining any goals you may have in life. I am convinced that life requires a certain dedication and perseverance that is learned from an early age. I am driven by my desire to equip Nzinga with as many tools as possible to be a success. I feel it's my duty as a parent and as a person to be involved in my daughter's life as much as possible. As a result I am a second-year Treasurer of the Parkside PTA and a resource for the principal and teachers.

What is something you would like to accomplish in the next 10 years?

I have been a yoga practitioner for about four years and am working towards becoming a certified yoga instructor within the next three years. Within the next ten years, I will be well on my way toward furthering my career in research and operations analysis, as well as opening a business in partnership with my mother.

Tell me a little about your background. Birthplace, brothers and sisters, etc.

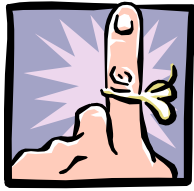
I was born in Columbus, Georgia in 1976 to Ola Smith, an Army Intelligence Officer, and David Dixon, an enlisted Army Officer. In 1980 my parents moved to Atlanta where I attained a diploma from North Clayton High School in College Park. I have one sister, Cassandra, who lives in Warner Robins with her husband, a truck driver, and her four children. My sister works as a Christian homeschool mother to her 14, 10, 7, and 5-year old children. My mother currently is the Chief Executive Officer of a network of community health center's in southwest Georgia. My father manages all Concessions for the Georgia World Congress Center.

Favorite ways to spend time away from work?

My first love is music so I spend many of my nights dancing to salsa, hip-hop, and fusion music, as well as listening to lots of jazz. I am a very active individual so when I'm not reading, I rollerblade, garden, go to the firing range, and watching UGA football with fellow graduates.

An intern is assigned to your office for the session. When it is Sine Die, what would you like for them to have learned about the General Assembly? What impression would you like for them to have of you?

I would like for an intern to come away with a better understanding of representative democracy and its influence on his life as a citizen of this state. I would like for he or she to recognize the complexity of politics and policy formulation. I would like for the intern's impression of me to be: team player, focused, good listener, resilient, and willing to go the extra mile to accomplish the goal.



Important Numbers

Please find below a convenient, easy list of frequently referenced numbers on Capitol Hill to place near your desk.

Senate

Lieutenant Governor	6-5030
President Pro Tempore	6-5109
Secretary of the Senate	6-5040
Senate Photo	6-0024
Senate Research	6-0015
Senate Information Office	6-0028
Toll Free Line	800-282-5803
Broadcast Line	800-282-5802
Senate Budget Office	3-1970

House

Speaker of the House	6-5020
Clerk of the House	6-5015
House Research	6-3206
House Information Office	6-0305
Toll Free Line	800-282-5800
Broadcast Line	800-282-5801
House Budget Office	6-5050

Georgia General Assembly

Legislative Counsel	6-5000
Legislative Fiscal Office	6-5054
Reapportionment Office	6-5063
Darryl	6-7870
	404-655-0917 (pager)

Governor

Governor's Office	6-1776
Governor's Press Office	1-7774

Miscellaneous

Secretary of State's Office	6-2881
Attorney General's Office	6-3300
GBA Police	6-3281
LOB	6-6042
CAP	6-3277
Guardhouse	6-3266
DOAS Phone Repair	6-0000
DOAS Mail/Courier Service	6-5522
LOB Post Office	6-0170
CAP Post Office	6-0445
Capitol Tours	6-2844

The Senate Spotlight is a product of the Senate Information Office. If you have a suggestion or a person you would like to be considered for the Senate Spotlight on Employees, please contact us at 404.656.0028.